

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION



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**TO:** Codex Contact Points  
Interested International Organizations

**FROM:** Secretary, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme  
00100 Rome, Italy

**SUBJECT:** Request for comments on Codex work on antimicrobial resistance

**DEADLINE:** 28 January 2006

## BACKGROUND

The 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) took note of a summary of an “Informal sharing of ideas regarding proposed terms of reference for future Codex work on antimicrobial resistance”, as contained in CAC/28 LIM. 32. The Commission supported the proposal in general, which was considered as providing a good basis for determining future Codex work on antimicrobial resistance. It was however suggested that Codex future work should have a clear focus on public health and ensure a holistic approach to solving the question at hand, should address antimicrobials in general so as to cover the use of pesticides and additives and not be restricted solely to antimicrobial drugs, and should also include animal feed. The scope should take into account ongoing work in other international organisations, in particular OIE and should adhere to the Working Principles for Risk Analysis in the Framework of the Codex Alimentarius.

The Commission noted that, according to the “Criteria for the Establishment of Subsidiary Bodies of the Codex Alimentarius Commission”<sup>1</sup>, before the Commission could establish a Task Force, the Commission needed: to agree upon a name of the Task Force; to define the terms of reference that should be limited to the immediate task at hand and clearly state the objective(s) to be achieved with the indication of either (i) the number of sessions to be convened, or (ii) the date (year) by which the work was expected to be completed.

The Commission **agreed**, in principle, to the establishment of an *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force to deal with the issue related to antimicrobial resistance. It was **agreed** that a final decision as to its establishment would be taken at the next session. In order to facilitate this decision, the Commission agreed that the Codex Secretariat in collaboration with FAO and WHO would prepare a Circular Letter based on the proposal in LIM 32, taking into account the above discussion, in order to request comments on what should be the specific terms of reference of such a Task Force. (ALINORM 05/28/41, paras 182-184)

## A) REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

In order to facilitate a final decision on the issue of antimicrobial resistance, and as requested by the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Secretariat, is distributing this Circular Letter to invite Members and interested International Organizations to provide:

- (a) Comments on the proposal attached in Annex I for new Codex work on antimicrobial resistance.
- (b) Suggestions for the title of a new *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Codex Task Force to deal with antimicrobial resistance and for the length of its mandate.

<sup>1</sup> Codex Alimentarius Commission, Procedural Manual – 14<sup>th</sup> Edition

Members and interested International Organizations are invited to provide comments and suggestions to the Secretary, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy (fax +39 06 570 54593; e-mail [codex@fao.org](mailto:codex@fao.org)), *preferably by e-mail*, **not later than 28 January 2006.**

**B) REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

Members and interested International Organizations are also invited to provide information on activities related to the monitoring of antimicrobial resistance and other useful information relevant to the work of FAO and WHO. This information should be sent to Dr. J. Schlundt, Director FOS, WHO, 20 Av. Appia, CH-1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland (fax: +41 22 791 4807; e-mail: [foodsafety@who.int](mailto:foodsafety@who.int)), with copy to FAO, Food Quality and Standards Service (ESNS), Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy (fax +39 06 570 54593; e-mail [jemra@fao.org](mailto:jemra@fao.org)) *preferably by e-mail*, **not later than 28 January 2006.**

## **Proposed Terms of Reference for Codex work on Antimicrobial Resistance**

### **A. Purpose**

Codex should develop science-based guidance, taking full account of its risk analysis principles, to reduce the risks to human health associated with the presence in food and feed and the transmission through food of antimicrobial resistant microorganisms and antimicrobial resistance genes.

### **B. Scope**

The outcome of Codex work in this area would be guidance on methodology and processes, including specific risk management options for risk reduction, based on risk assessment as provided by FAO/WHO through JEMRA and in close collaboration with OIE, taking into account work undertaken in this field at national and international level. .

To achieve this outcome, elements would include:

- The establishment of risk profiles with respect to the antimicrobial resistance potential of different antimicrobials used in animals intended for food (including aquaculture) and in feed production.
- The prioritization of this work with a particular emphasis on the public health and animal health significance of the antimicrobials under consideration.
- A clear identification and characterization of the hazard and risk presented by antimicrobial resistance transmission through food and feed.
- The provision of specific risk management advice in relation to reducing risk to human health associated with the transmission through food of antimicrobial resistance.

### **C. Activities**

- i) Define the process by which this work would be undertaken.
- ii) Prioritize the antimicrobials used in animals intended for food and in feed production, with a particular emphasis on their public health and animal health significance, taking into consideration ongoing FAO, WHO and OIE work to define antimicrobials critically important to human and animal health.
- iii) Establish risk profiles with respect to the antimicrobial resistance potential of different antimicrobials used in animals intended for food and in feed production, including identification of additional data needed for scientific advice.
- iv) Define risk assessment policy for use by FAO and WHO (JEMRA) in this area taking account of relevant work undertaken in this area.
- v) Seek scientific advice from FAO/WHO/OIE as required. This could include requests for risk assessments to be performed by FAO/WHO (JEMRA) in coordination with OIE, after a clear definition of scope and purpose of the work to be done.
- vi) Develop specific risk management advice based on the identified priorities, the risk profiles, the results of the risk assessments, as well as existing documents/guidelines from FAO, WHO and OIE related to the containment of antimicrobial resistance in animals for food and ongoing work from FAO, WHO and OIE on critically important antimicrobials.